NDU international fellows on class trip.

National Defense University

Educating Foreign Officers

By DOUGLAS M. GIBLER *and* TOMISLAV Z. RUBY

An editorial published in a British newspaper in 2001 lamented the fact that the School of the Americas at Fort Benning had trained a string of military dictators in recent decades: Roberto Viola and Leopoldo Galtieri of Argentina, Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, and Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador—as well as the leaders of death squads in Peru and Honduras, among other notorious graduates.[1] And other programs operated by the Armed Forces have been cited for training Indonesians prior to the repression in East Timor as well as future Taliban leaders during Afghan resistance to Soviet occupation.

However, such cases are unrepresentative of the international military education programs conducted by the United States. Far more characteristic is the example of the war college graduate from Central Europe who went on to an assignment at NATO headquarters or another from the Middle East who returned home to educate fellow officers. Professional military education (PME) acts as a stabilizing factor that provides officers from many nations with the opportunity for study and exposure to the democratic values while attending senior- and intermediate-level institutions in America.

Terra Aliena

Half a million foreign officers have attended programs in the United States—nine thousand from over a hundred countries in 2000—and of that number, some two hundred annually attend year-long courses with their American counterparts at PME institutions.

Professional military education differs from specialty training, which defines career fields for officers. Each service operates both a senior and

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THE SCHOOLHOUSES

Each service operates professional military education institutions on the senior (war college) and intermediate (staff college) levels. In addition, the National Defense University administers three colleges under the authority of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, was founded in 1901 and has graduated more than 700 international fellows from almost 100 nations since 1978. On the intermediate level, more than 6,000 officers from over 140 countries have attended the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, since the early 1900s. With some 90 students representing 75 countries per class, the college lists 23 alumni who have become heads of state in their respective countries.

The Naval War College was established at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1884. It operates two institutions for international officers, the Naval Command College and the Naval Staff College. The Naval Command College was organized in 1956 and parallels the College of Naval Warfare, which educates U.S. students. It has graduated more than 1,500 senior officers from almost 90 nations—over half of whom have reached flag rank and approximately one in ten have become chiefs of their navies. The Naval Staff College was established in 1973 and has graduated over 1,400 mid-level officers from some 120 nations. This institution is being integrated into the College of Naval Command and Staff, which is attended by U.S. students.

On the senior and intermediate levels, the Marine Corps War College and the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, are constituent institutions of the Marine Corps University, which is located at Quantico Marine Base, Virginia. Some two dozen international students are enrolled each year in the latter institution.

The Air War College and the Air Command and Staff College were both organized in 1946 and are administered by Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. The former college is attended by foreign students from 45 nations and the latter enrolls some 80 officers from abroad.

The National Defense University was established in 1976 and is comprised of two senior-level institutions, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and the National War College, which are located at Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington. Approximately 36 international fellows attend these two colleges each year. The Industrial College of the Armed Forces is the successor to the Army Industrial College, which was organized in 1924; the National War College was founded in 1946.

The Joint Forces Staff College (formerly the Armed Forces Staff College) was incorporated into the National Defense University in 1981 and is located in Norfolk, Virginia. It enrolls approximately 50 foreign students each year in courses on joint planning and warfighting on the operational level, and traces its lineage to the Army-Navy Staff College, which was created during World War II. JFQ

an intermediate-level PME institution (or war and staff college). In addition, the National Defense University administers the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and the National War College on the senior level as well as the Joint Forces Staff College, which are joint institutions operating under the auspices of the Chairman (see the accompanying insert, "The Schoolhouses").

In general, war college programs primarily focus on national military and national security strategy while staff college programs are devoted to theater-level operational art. The Chairman is required to ensure that curricula are current, standardized, and compliant with Goldwater-Nichols. Many countries send officers to the United States on a reimbursable basis under the Foreign Military Sales program, much as they purchase equipment. Developing nations that cannot afford the cost of education are provided with military assistance by the Department of State under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program.

Phrases such as supporting security assistance, international involvement, lasting relations, and the like are common in descriptions of these programs. Educating international officers develops channels of communication with other nations and promotes democratic ideals around the world. Resident programs build familiarity with American officers to forge lasting friendships and an affinity for democratic values.

Emerging Democracies

The road to democracy is prone to violence. Embattled elites may attempt to manipulate nationalistic tendencies and create an alternative to mass democracy movements. These elites are easier to coordinate, often have better political access, and are better able to use the weak institutions of emerging democracies to their advantage. Rising nationalism then turns to a fait accompli that sends a state to war. The elites favor war because during wartime democratic rule can be dispensed with in favor of authoritarian measures. As one analysis pointed out, most great powers have been belligerent during democratic transitions because of this elite competition.[2]

Although war may be more likely in transitioning states, the probability of conflict is quite small even when there may be elite competition. Absent a divisionary war, strong elite interests often use the military to displace a transitioning

Senior Malaysian officer, Fort Stewart.

Fort Stewart (Michael Lemke)

regime. A more elite-friendly regime then appeals to authoritarian means to quell mass democratic movements. This is why coups are more likely in periods of transition, and it is not a coincidence that most originate in military mutinies. Elites can ensure that democratic transition does not happen by capturing the military.

Fear of military intervention in politics may prompt some governments to educate soldiers. By emphasizing technical expertise, professional military education can break down the corporate identity and parochialism of armed forces. Professionalism can isolate officers from undue interest in the civil sector. As one researcher argues, this is one of many strategies that repressive regimes adopt to ensure their power.[3]

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But coup-proofing need not be limited to authoritarian governments; it can benefit at-risk regimes, and often the least stable regimes are undergoing or have recently completed transitions to democracy. The political tensions experienced in such regimes, and the susceptibility of their militaries to elitism, makes professionalization and democratization of the military essential tools in the liberalization of their political systems.

In addition to the primary focus of their curricula, PME institutions offer another level of expertise. The emphasis on civilian control of the military, democratic decisionmaking, and social responsibility in the officer corps provides valuable lessons. For many foreign officers, this educational opportunity is their first exposure to graduate-level study, making PME an important path toward developing truly professional militaries for their countries.

Study at an intermediate or senior college also exposes foreign officers to American society. They do not simply live abroad for a year; many are accompanied by family, and their children go to local schools and spouses attend culture classes. They learn about their U.S. counterparts through intramural sports and social events. In fact, as one study reveals, "Of all the experiences foreign military students remember, contact with the American culture stands out. . . . Curiosity about the United States and how free market democracy functions today is greater than ever."[4]

Alumni of the National Defense University include several foreign officers who assumed critical roles in political change. Pro-democracy graduates overthrew a 23-year-old dictatorship in Mali and rallied pro-democracy demonstrators in Thailand, while others put down attempted coups in Venezuela. But education alone will not stabilize the situation in each case. For example, some graduates were forcibly retired in Yugoslavia, removing officers who might oppose undemocratic practices. The issue then becomes whether the educational experience can overcome illegitimate regime change in transitioning countries.

Because test cases can be anomalies rather than representing trends, Argentina, Greece, and Taiwan provide insights on the influence of professional military education. Despite differences

in history, culture, and national policies, all three nations have experienced a democratic transition since 1970, been an ally or friend, and sent officers to study at institutions in America.

Although some observers identify foreign military programs with would-be dictators, this is not the experience of PME institutions. Based on a survey of students between 1950 and 1999, only two officers were charged with any form of malfeasance out of 114 Argentines, 203 Greeks, and 331 Taiwanese educated in the United States. Both were charged with abuses in Argentina. However, neither of them led a coup or junta. This amounts to only 4 percent—two out of more than fifty graduates prior to 1983—and was far below the estimated number of Argentine officers (20 percent) who took part in the so-called dirty war.

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Argentina

In the wake of the Falklands/Malvinas War, the Argentine military underwent a profound change that included massive demobilization, budgetary cuts, a volunteer force, and professional military education similar to the U.S. model. The armed forces had traditionally guarded the type of education officers received by managing curricula and exposure to civil virtues. This level of control ensured domestic autonomy for the military, but it also contributed to the debacle at the hands of the more advanced professional force.

Realizing the need for professionalism, the military encouraged officers to attend university either at home or abroad. High-ranking officers were selected for programs in the United States at a rate of about five per year beginning in 1988, and every Argentine officer had earned a college degree of some kind by 1997. The American influence became apparent in 1991 when Argentina established a new command staff college that has become one of the most renowned educational institutions in the country. The curriculum is explicitly based on the U.S. model, emphasizing respect for and subordination to the constitution and the law.

Professionalization has been guided by education. Argentina has experienced several major shocks in response to financial crises in recent years—upheavals that once would have led to coups and countercoups—but the military stayed in the barracks. As the Army Chief of Staff, General Ricardo Brinzoni, stated: "The Argentine army has given sufficient proof during the past 18 years about our steady assimilation into a democratic society."[5]

Hellenic Republic

Like the experience of Argentina, democratization came to Greece only after the failure of a military regime. Seizing power in 1969, the armed forces organized a junta that became more authoritarian as economic conditions worsened. Some 150 officers were purged through forced retirement and dishonorable discharges. Two of the highest ranking officers had been graduated from institutions in the United States. Threatened by a Turkish invasion during the Cyprus crisis of 1973, the junta transferred power to civilian authority. Elections followed and Greece became fully democratic by 1975. American graduates returned to service and rose to the highest ranks in the Hellenic armed forces.

The disgrace of the junta helped maintain civilian authority, but the threat of coups took longer to extinguish. One observer noted that "the overwhelming majority of both retired pro- and anti-junta officers interviewed" agreed that military intervention might have been necessary if the external threat increased or if domestic politicians made "terrible mistakes," which helps explain why coup attempts continued until the mid-1980s.[6] The attitudinal change for the Greek military finally came with the restructuring of its PME system.

In 1983 a Socialist government began a reform of the military academies. Admission was integrated with nationalized university exams, and background investigations were discontinued. Curricula were modeled on the U.S. professional military education system to inculcate democratic values. As a result, attendance was more than doubled and changes in selection criteria ensured that senior officers went to American schools. These developments combined to guarantee that liberal education dominated the academies and effectively altered the mindset of the officer corps.

Republic of China

Before the revision of sedition laws on Taiwan, the armed forces dominated a vital aspect of civilian life. The military was responsible for conducting trials of accused spies. The number of trials and political prisoners, combined with authoritarian rule, suggested that the armed forces were agents of the ruling elite, but the conduct of the military courts pointed to something else. Although government political trials were secret, military trials were open. Defense lawyers had time to prepare their cases and the transcripts of court proceedings were published. While those

AP/Wide World Photo (Alik Keplicz)

The Chairman with Polish army chief.

practices do not guarantee fair trials, they are not characteristic of kangaroo courts.

As one of the largest beneficiaries of professional military education with 331 graduates, Taiwan was able to democratize without a coup. These officers greatly influenced military courts and have been called upon to redress corruption in the armed forces. In 1985, a crime investigation led investigators to believe that the ring included military officers, and several senior members of the Military Intelligence Bureau were arrested and tried for murder. Although none had attended U.S. institutions, graduates were placed in command positions during the ensuing reorganization of the intelligence hierarchy. They were tasked with cleaning up the bureau. The role that graduates have played within the armed forces, and the removal of the military from political competition, suggests that professional military education is working on Taiwan.

The experiences of Argentina, Greece, and Taiwan bear witness to the benefits of the U.S. professional military education system. In addition, research supports this finding across all nations: the likelihood of coup attempts drops by more than half with the involvement of graduates, despite the strength of alliances, Cold War mindsets, and changes in wealth. The evidence of education as a stabilizing force is convincing.

Prior to World War II, *Ecole Superieure de Guerre* in France offered an elite experience for officers from many nations. It graduated professional, better-educated students who tended to become Francophiles after their year-long course. Today, the U.S. professional military education system is the standard by which other countries educate officers.

The United States has encouraged a greater number of officers from abroad to attend PME institutions as part of the global war on terrorism. The FY03 budget has projected a 27.5 percent growth in IMET funds over FY01 as well as a similar increase in the number of students. However, the traditional emphasis of professional military education institutions on democratic values should not be subsumed to the challenge of countering terrorism. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] George Monbiot, "Backyard Terrorism," *The Guardian* (London), October 30, 2001.

[2] Edward D. Mansfield and Jack S. Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security,* vol. 20, no. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 5–38.

[3] James T. Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: Its Practices and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999), pp. 152–53.

[4] John A. Cope, "International Military Education and Training: An Assessment," McNair Paper 44 (Washington: National Defense University Press, October 1995), chapter 8.

[5] Jose C. D'Odorico, "Chief to Chief," *Armed Forces Journal International*, vol. 138, no. 10 (May 2001), p. 62.

[6] Neovi Karakatsanis, "Do Attitudes Matter? The Military and Democratic Consolidation in Greece," *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Winter 1997), pp. 289–313.